

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Canton School District  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2001-2002**

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**Date of Report:** July 16, 2002

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Maintenance</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

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<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- ? Canton policy book
- ? District newsletter
- ? Newspaper article
- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Coordinator job description

- ? Log of child find procedures to district staff
- ? Log of Referral/Evaluation procedures to district staff
- ? Table E - Enrollment
- ? Table F (Part B application for funds)
- ? August district newsletter
- ? Survey for regular and special educators
- ? Log of inservice activity
- ? Teacher assistance team meeting procedures
- ? Student assistance plans
- ? File reviews
- ? Parent surveys
- ? Canton special education budget
- ? Previous review information
- ? Reports to administrators
- ? Discipline referral forms
- ? Table C – Suspension and Expulsion
- ? Canton curriculum cycle
- ? Special education staff development logs

### **Promising Practice**

Students served in appropriate facilities at no cost to the parents/guardians, the desire to serve as many students as possible in the district and involving appropriate personnel in all out of district placements were cited as promising practices by the steering committee.

### **Maintenance**

The steering committee determined areas of maintenance in their self-assessment to be that the district has policy and procedures in place for the child find process. The procedures are published annually and reviewed with the Canton community and school staff. Services are available for all children who are special education eligible. The higher percentage of special education students could be the result of the district's good reputation. Six open enrolled students are students with disabilities. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure referrals are properly implemented.

If a private school were developed, policies/procedures and IDEA application for funds guidelines would be implemented. Data is collected and used to assess and provide appropriate educational programs and staff for children with disabilities. Students and families are provided with the most appropriate assessment instruments based upon the IEP and individual needs.

The district is following the procedures/plan for recruiting and hiring individuals. The district follows the proscribed staff development plan that includes both local and state technical assistance.

The comprehensive plan and the district policy manual are in place to respond to student discipline issues. The district follows the due process procedures that are afforded to all students in special education and their parents. Clarification is needed for reporting race, ethnicity, and disabilities for state reporting.

### **Needs Improvement**

Based upon their self-assessment, the steering committee determined areas requiring improvement are to have better parent participation in the pre-referral process and documentation of their participation and to have and implement a uniform procedure/policy on recording suspension/expulsion data.

## **Validation Results**

### **Promising Practice**

The district practices a team meeting effort that allows the all of the teachers to set aside time to collaborate on their schedules and communicate about upcoming team teaching activities which directly effect the students in their classrooms. Additionally, this time is utilized to discuss specific progress or concerns about students in relation to their classroom activities or individual education plan.

### **Maintenance**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

### **Areas that need improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas in need of improvement for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

### **Areas out of compliance**

#### **24:05:24:01. Referral**

Referral includes any written request, which brings a student to the attention of a school district administrator as a student who may be in need of special education. A referral made by a parent may be submitted verbally but a district administrator must document it. Other referral sources include screening, classroom teacher, other district personnel, public or private agencies and private schools.

#### **24:05:24:02. Duties of the district after referral**

Upon receiving a referral the school district shall conduct an informal review or may proceed with the evaluation process. An informal review includes a conference, if appropriate with the person making the referral and a review of the student record.

#### **24:05:24:03. Duties of a district after informal review.**

If, after informal review arising from a parental referral, the district determines that no evaluation is necessary, the district shall inform the parents of its decision and the reasons for the decision. It shall also inform the parents of their due process rights.

#### **24:05:27:21. Transition to preschool program.**

The district shall include in its policy the procedures for the transition of children participating in the early intervention program to preschool programs. These procedures must include the requirement for the IEP to be developed by the child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing families with information on eligibility and evaluation including parental rights/procedural safeguards.

The team noted that referrals from the Single Point Of Contact were not acted upon within a reasonable amount of time. For example, a referral for evaluation/eligibility determination was received 7-12-01, prior notice/consent was acquired on 9-25-01, and the evaluations were completed on 11-7-01 and 11-15-01, with the placement meeting held on 11-29-01. The child's birthday was 11-16-98 and the IEP was not developed until 11-29-01 after the child had turned 3 years old.

File reviews and interview with district staff suggested a potential problem with the district's referral process. The procedures used at the elementary level do not allow educators to initiate a referral without first going through the TAT process. Students who display obvious disability characteristics or performance deficits would still be required to go through the TAT process rather than an immediate

referral to special education and the informal review process. The TAT process, which usually takes 30 days, could be viewed as a process that delays referral and provision of FAPE to students with disabilities especially if the delay is due to the psychologist's evaluation schedule.

#### 24:05:22:03. Certified Child

Documentation supporting a child's disabling condition must be maintained by the school district for verification of its annual federal child count. Through a review of student records and through interview the monitoring team could not locate an IEP in effect on 12-1-00 for one student placed on the district's child count. In addition, evaluation documentation found for two students did not support eligibility for special education. There was no evidence that the team invalidated test scores and placed these students through the override provision. The district has been informed of student names and is required to immediately reevaluate and determine if these children meet the state eligibility criteria based upon the suspected areas of disability. In the event the student's do not meet the eligibility criteria, the district will be required to reimburse the child count funds received based upon their inclusion on the 12-1-00 child count.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- ✍ Table I – Placement by age
- ✍ Table J – Placement by disabling condition
- ✍ Table C – Suspension and expulsion
- ✍ Table B – Instructional staff
- ✍ Table F – Placement alternatives
- ✍ Special education fund report
- ✍ Teacher and parent surveys
- ✍ Sioux Valley newspaper
- ✍ Monthly school bulletin
- ✍ Verbal confirmation of training in suspension/expulsion policy and procedures

### **Maintenance**

The steering committee determined areas of maintenance in their self-assessment to be that if a student with disabilities is suspended or expelled, procedures are in place to provide a free appropriate public education to include all special education services. Administrative staff has received instruction on policy/procedure regarding the suspension/expulsion of a student with a disability. The district is providing FAPE to eligible students and eligible students are receiving services from birth through 21.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Maintenance**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation**

A team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input, conducts a comprehensive evaluation. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- ✍ Comprehensive plan
- ✍ Referral form
- ✍ Parent rights brochure
- ✍ Technical assistance guide
- ✍ Budget
- ✍ In-service training
- ✍ TAT meetings
- ✍ Team meetings
- ✍ File reviews
- ✍ Table G – Disabling conditions
- ✍ Table M - Hearings
- ✍ Table L - Complaints
- ✍ Parent surveys
- ✍ File reviews
- ✍ District newsletter
- ✍ Parent information brochure
- ✍ Prior notice form
- ✍ Excent training log
- ✍ District newsletter
- ✍ Middle school team meeting notes
- ✍ TAT meeting – elementary
- ✍ Table H – Exiting information
- ✍ Table M - Hearings

### **Promising Practices**

The steering committee determined areas of positive practice in their self-assessment to be that parents receive the parental rights brochure, qualified staff administers tests for evaluations, consent is obtained before doing evaluations and groups are in place to determine the appropriate assessments.

### **Maintenance:**

The steering committee determined areas of maintenance in their self-assessment to be that the district has in place policies regarding evaluation, a variety of assessment tools are used to evaluate students within 25 school day timeline, to determine eligibility and placement. Parents are informed of evaluations, their parental rights and are provided prior notice by the district. Other areas of maintenance include Excent training provided by the educational cooperative and referral training provided by the district.

### **Areas that need improvement**

Based upon their self-assessment, the steering committee determined areas requiring improvement are that functional evaluations were not given in all cases, materials for students with limited English

proficiency were not readily available and consent is attained but not all blanks on the prior notice are completed.

#### **Areas out of compliance**

Based upon the self-assessment, the steering committee determined the lack of staff training and parent input into the evaluation process to be an area out of compliance.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Maintenance**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance identified under appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

#### **Areas that need improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with the areas in need of improvement as identified under “appropriate evaluation”. Additional information regarding functional evaluation is provided under “areas out of compliance”. Additional information regarding prior notice is provided under Principle 4, Procedural Safeguards.

Through a review of 3 student files and interview the monitoring team concluded that the district needs to develop a consistent process for verifying that evaluation reports/summaries are provided to parents. Sometimes it was validated through parent initials on the IEPs and on other IEPs it was omitted.

#### **Areas out of compliance**

##### 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures.

A variety of assessment tools and strategies used to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child to determine eligibility and program placement.

Through a review of 11 student records, the monitoring team found the district staff did not include functional information in the evaluation process or understand that this information was to be summarized and used for determining specific skills areas affected by the student’s disability, the student’s present levels of academic performance, their progress in the general curriculum and the development of annual goals and short term instructional objectives. Functional assessment information is available through a variety of sources in the district, however, there is not an established process across all grade levels and disciplines for collecting, analyzing, summarizing or integrating the information into the 25 day evaluation process for all eligible students.

##### 24:05:04.02. Determination of needed evaluation data.

A team of individuals, including input from the student’s parents, determines what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child special education needs. If no additional data are needed, the student’s parents must be notified of this fact and the reasons for this decision.

Through interviews with staff the monitoring team concluded the district does not implement a consistent procedure for documenting parent input. Some staff stated they usually make a comment on the prior notice if they remember, other stated they make a “parent contact” note in the record and there also is a form that can be completed and included in the file. Evidence of parent involvement into the evaluation process was not available in a review of 10 student records. In 2 student files reviewed, the prior notice did not contain sufficient evaluation areas to determine eligibility. For example, the areas to be evaluated listed on the prior notice/consent for a student suspected as having a learning disability were achievement, behavior and criterion referenced tests. The parent did not have input into nor were they informed of the need to use a previously administered ability test to determine eligibility. In another situation, prior

notice was not sent to parents regarding the evaluation information to be used to determine if their child was eligible for services as he moved from the infants and toddlers program to the Part B program under the IDEA.

#### 24:05:25:04. Evaluation Procedures.

Evaluation procedures must ensure that a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability and that no single procedure is used as a sole criterion for determining eligibility. Through a review of student records, the monitoring team found a single procedure was used to determine eligibility for a student identified as speech/language impaired. Only the Goldman-Fristoe test of articulation was administered.

### **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Parent rights brochure
- ? Student file reviews
- ? IEP
- ? DECA website
- ? Parent and teacher surveys
- ? Technical assistance for the office of special education
- ? Excent training
- ? Prior notice
- ? FERPA disclosure
- ? Access logs
- ? School newsletter
- ? Table L - Complaints

#### **Maintenance**

The steering committee determined areas of maintenance in their self-assessment to be that the district has policies and procedures in place to ensure the transfer of rights at age 18. Prior notice and procedural safeguards are provided to parents at appropriate times. The content of the parental rights brochure is appropriate and parental consent is acquired at appropriate times. The steering committee also determined student confidentiality, parent access to student records, independent educational evaluation and parental knowledge of complaint procedures as areas of maintenance.

#### **Areas that need improvement**

The steering committee determined areas in need of improvement in their self-assessment to be that the parental right information is only available in one language and that the district is not keeping staff updated on current consent procedures.

## **Validation Results**

### **Maintenance**

The monitoring team agrees with the areas of maintenance identified under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee. Additional information regarding the transfer of rights at age 18 is provided under “areas out of compliance”.

### **Areas that need improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with the areas in need of improvement identified under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

### **Areas out of compliance**

24:05:30:16.01.Transfer of parental rights.

24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program

The student and their parents must be informed of the transfer of parental rights one year prior to the student turning 18. In a review of 3 student records, there was no indication the student or parents were informed of the transfer of rights one year prior to the student turning age 18.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- ? Student file reviews
- ? Administrative interviews
- ? Teacher and parent surveys
- ? Teacher schedules.

### **Promising Practices**

Regular educators attendance at IEP meetings and collaborative instruction of the special educator and general educator in team-taught language and math classes at the middle school were cited as area of promising practice by the steering committee.

### **Maintenance**

The steering committee determined areas of maintenance in their self-assessment to be compliance with special factors addressed in student IEPs, annual goals that are appropriate, and district support of the special educator in the general education classroom for Science and English at the secondary level.

### **Areas that need improvement**

The steering committee determined areas in need of improvement in their self-assessment to be the need to follow IEP requirements regarding transition, present levels of performance, progress reporting, descriptions of related services and completion of prior notices. The steering committee also identified



adherence to process timelines and the attendance of an administrator or designee at all IEP meeting as areas in need of improvement.

#### **Areas out of compliance**

Based upon a review of data, the steering committee concluded that the district needs to monitor and enforce IEP review dates.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Promising Practices**

The school district has currently established the fall 2002 school class schedule for teachers and students. The district has coordinated a time for students to meet their new teacher before the school is completed for the current year. This preplanning of schedules will result in students having a clear understanding of their schedules and teacher assignments in order to feel confident as they move forward to the next grade.

#### **Maintenance**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance for individual education program as concluded by the steering committee.

#### **Areas that need improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with the areas in need of improvement identified under individual education program content as concluded by the steering committee. Additional information regarding IEP content is provided under “areas out of compliance”. In a review of student records the monitoring team would like to remind district staff to consistently use the accept/reject format when justifying placement for students. In two files reviewed by the team the placement options accepted/rejected were not documented by the team in the student’s IEP.

#### **Areas out of compliance**

##### 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program

A student’s IEP must contain present levels of performance statements based upon the skill areas affected by the students identified disability. The present levels of performance statements are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In a review of 13 student files, present levels of performance were not linked to functional evaluation. In a review of 11 student files, present levels of performance did not consistently contain the student’s academic strengths, needs in the skill areas affected by the student’s disability or their involvement in the general curriculum.

The IEP must describe individual modifications needed by the student, and the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those modifications. Three IEPs reviewed by the team did not consistently describe the frequency, location or duration of the needed modifications. Two IEPs included frequency statements such as “as needed”.

For each student beginning at age 14 the IEP must include a statement of the transition service needs of the student that focuses on the student’s course of study. For each student beginning at age sixteen a statement of the needed transition services is required including interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. Through interview and a review of student records the review team found transition evaluation was not considered or administered for students approaching transition age in order to design an outcome oriented process which promotes movement from school to post-school activities. Transition evaluation was not completed for four students according to file information. Transition activities were not addressed in the IEPs of four students who were 16 year old or older. During interview, district staff stated they were unsure of the transition requirements and how to effectively determine and incorporate transition services into a student’s program. The monitoring team recommends the district incorporate transition in-service activities into the improvement planning process for district staff.

## **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions; consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Budgeted services
- ? Budget information
- ? Teacher schedules
- ? Parent and teacher surveys
- ? File reviews
- ? Table E - Enrollment
- ? Table L - Complaints
- ? Table M - Hearings
- ? Table N - Monitoring
- ? Table F – Placement alternatives
- ? Table I – Placement by age
- ? Table B – Instructional staff

#### **Promising practices**

Daily meetings, held at the middle school level to discuss student needs, provide beneficial results for staff and students was cited as a promising practice by the steering committee.

#### **Maintenance**

The steering committee determined areas of maintenance in their self-assessment to be that the district has policies and procedures in place to support least restrictive environment, that students are appropriately placed at all levels, and the district offers training regarding least restrictive environment.

#### **Areas that need improvement**

The steering committee determined an area in need of improvement in their self-assessment to be the need for the district to encourage staff to attend in and out of district training on least restrictive environment.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Positive Practice**

The district utilizes a team teaching model in the middle school, which was observed while the review team was onsite. Through observation and interview, it was determined that this inclusion activity is beneficial to all of the students because it allows the general education students to view the special education teachers as a positive resource when they need assistance. All students in the classroom experience the same curriculum but are supported in a manner through modifications and accommodations that meets their individual needs.

**Maintenance**

The monitoring team agrees with all area of maintenance for least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.

**Areas that need improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas in need of improvement for least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.